

The God Ordained Institution of Slavery

Friends and fellow citizens,

We meet at an important crossroad. There has been no greater threat to our union, which our forefathers built. We have the opportunity now to decide what will become of our nation. My name is Stilton Banner, and I come today to speak of not just surviving but of protecting our homes, our faith, and our way of life.

For the first time since its founding, a political party has openly declared that our nation cannot endure as it was made. They call slavery a "relic of barbarism," ("Republican Party Platform of 1856") and vow to drive it to "ultimate extinction" (Lincoln "A House Divided"). Abraham Lincoln, their forefront, told us: "this Governemnt cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free"(Lincoln "A House Divided"). He declares that he expects the nation to become "all one thing or all the other," and that slavery must be placed "in the course of ultimate extinction." (Lincoln "A House Divided").

Then, if we look at Lincoln's supporter and the architect of the Republican Party, William H. Seward, his speech "An Irrepressible Conflict" reveals a chilling prophecy. One which says "the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave holding nation, or entirely a free-labor nation"(William H. Seward "The Irrepressible Conflict"). Following this, he openly proclaims that the Democratic party must be removed from the government — the party that has sought to unite us Kentuckians. (Seward "The Irrepressible Conflict") Make no mistake, they intend to use federal power to prohibit slavery in every territory.

We must ask ourselves what gives them the right to call this institution into question? They do not point to any law of this land-- as the Constitution protects our property in every state. This institution, which has stood since the beginning of time, has been sanctioned by the gospel, so what law could be higher than it? In the Gospel of John we read "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"(John 1:1). If we believe that Scripture is sovereign, then we must listen to what it teaches. Then, if we are to look at Leviticus, chapter 25, verses 44-46, it declares, "Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life..."(Leviticus 25:44-46). This was not a description of common law but the word of God, which was delivered to Moses, commanding his fellow people on servitude. If we believe the Bible as our guide, then we must see that slavery is not a sin but sanctioned by God.

We must ask ourselves why God would establish such a relationship. The Presbyterian minister James Henley Thornwell calls this "the moral probation," which imposes an obligation to labor on all (Thornwell, "Rights and Duties of Masters"). Furthermore, Thornwell reminds us that the relation between master and slave "is a school of discipline for both. It is a sphere in which the moral nature of each may be developed, and the character of each may be perfected" (Thornwell "A Southern Christian View of Slavery"). This gives the master a sacred duty to protect and guide his servant towards civilization and salvation.

The Apostle Paul instructs in Ephesians 6 that slaves should respect and obey their masters as if "serving the Lord [...] and masters [to] treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. [...] Those who act in this way will be rewarded, whether they are slave or free" (Ephesians 6:5-9). If we are to believe in the word of God, then it must follow that those who labor in this institution are elevated and not degraded by it.

This is what you will see in Kentucky. I have baptized all my slaves. They each attend church with my family every Sunday. In return, they labor faithfully. Now, let us look at the conditions of the people of the North. There, the laborer has no guide, no protector. He can be cast out when sick or old. In both conditions, the laborer must work each morning, but in only one the worker is provided food, shelter, and moral instruction.

Some might cite passages in the bible such as Exodus 21:16 "Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession" (Exodus 21:16). But to be clear, this forbids the unlawful seizure of free men--the crime which we have redeemed America from in 1808. Paul himself sent a slave back to their master, commanding that they be received "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved" (Philemon 1:16). The gospel does not abolish the relationship of slave and master but sanctifies it.

We have also heard the voice of Frederick Douglass, stating that American Christianity is a "thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nations of savages" (Douglass "The meaning of July Fourth for the Negro"). But if we are to look to scripture with clear eyes and only read the word of God, we see there is nothing forbidding slavery--only addressed and regulated. The Church has no authority to condemn what God has ordained.

My fellow Kentuckians, we are told we must choose between the Union, our institution, and our rights. That is false. The true threat to our life, liberty, and property is those who refuse to abide by the Constitution as it is written. I stand with my fellow Democrats and those who believe our way of life can and must endure; To protect slavery where it exists as an institution that guides souls toward salvation, to respect state rights, and to honor the laws of God. But for this, we must stand together as men who know that the path of the Lord is one of order, duty, and spiritual progress. Let us prove that the union can be preserved not by surrendering our rights but by defending them with honor.

God bless you all, and God bless the Union our fathers gave us.

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